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and

**JED C. LUDLOW**

**for**

# METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR POSITIONING A MOVABLE BODY IN A MAGNETIC BEARING SYSTEM

1                                   **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR POSITIONING**  
2                                   **A MOVABLE BODY IN A MAGNETIC BEARING SYSTEM**

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4                                   **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

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6           1.       **The Field of the Invention**

7                   The present invention relates to a method and system of positioning a movable body  
8 in a magnetic bearing system. More specifically, the present invention relates to a method  
9 and system of adjusting a sensor output signal, used to measure the position of the body, to  
10 account for sensor offset error due to aging, and using the adjusted signal to position the  
11 body during regular operation of the system, or to provide a starting position for the body  
12 when the system reboots or restarts.

13  
14       2.       **The Relevant Technology**

15                   Unstable systems such as magnetic bearing systems which support a movable body  
16 without a mechanical coupling or bearing are ideally configured for fluid pumps that handle  
17 sensitive or corrosive fluids such as blood. Blood for example, can damage mechanical  
18 couplings, seals, and other pump parts with which it comes into contact. The mechanical  
19 couplings and interacting pump parts, conversely, can damage blood cells. Other fluids need  
20 to be free from contamination, mechanical shear, and other problems stemming from fluid  
21 interaction with the pump. Many food industry items require special handling to maintain  
22 their purity. Still other fluids do not respond well to increases in heat which often  
23 accompany many mechanical couplings. Thus, pumps with magnetically suspended rotors  
24 have been developed. The rotor may be made of non corrosive material for specific contact  
25 with the particular fluid being pumped. The rotor is magnetically suspended in the fluid and  
26 coupled to an isolated motor. Because the rotor is levitated actively or passively by a series

1 of permanent or electromagnets, there is no direct mechanical interaction of pump parts to  
2 each other. The only moving part that the fluid interacts with is the rotor itself. This  
3 configuration minimizes many of the problems associated with fluid interaction with the  
4 mechanical parts of the pump.

5 Magnetic bearing systems, are often unstable however. Forces due to gravitation,  
6 fluid flow, vacuums, and the magnets themselves affect the position of the rotor during  
7 pumping operation. In a magnetic bearing pump, for example, if a rotor is too far out of  
8 position, not only could it adversely affect the operation of the pump, but the rotor could be  
9 overcome by one or more of the magnetic fields supporting it, causing the rotor to clamp  
10 down against a magnet preventing the pump from operating at all.

11 Accordingly, some magnetic bearing systems have means to detect the position of  
12 the movable body being magnetically suspended and provide a self adjusting mechanism for  
13 repositioning the movable body. One such system is the subject of U.S. Patent No.  
14 3,860,300, which discloses a permanent and electromagnet system. The electromagnets are  
15 used for control purposes. A persisting net force produces electrical energization of the  
16 electromagnet system resulting from displacement of the movable body. The net force is  
17 augmented until the movable body is repositioned to an oppositely displaced position of  
18 substantial equilibrium. Another self-adjusting system is disclosed in U.S. Patent No.  
19 5,783,885 which discloses a self-adjusting magnetic bearing system which automatically  
20 adjusts the parameters of an axially unstable magnetic bearing such that its force balance is  
21 maintained near the point of unstable equilibrium.

22 The problem with many known self-adjusting magnetic bearing systems, however,  
23 is that they are sensor-based and do not account for aging or damaged sensors that may drift  
24 over time. Electrical sensors, for example, may not take the same reading for the same  
25 position of a suspended movable body as they may have when they were newer. Thus, the  
26 system may respond and react to adjust a movable position that the system determines is at

1 a certain point, relative to a point of equilibrium, when in fact, the rotor is slightly offset  
2 from that particular portion. This phenomenon is often referred to as "sensor drift." Sensor  
3 drift may be caused by aging, temperature variations, jarring, misalignment or other factors.

4 Known self-adjusting systems use output from sensors to reposition the suspended  
5 movable body. If the output is incorrect by some amount of sensor offset, a position  
6 controller may have to work too hard to reposition the movable body. This may result in  
7 damaging excess heat created by the over-worked positioner or controller. Further, it may  
8 require excess energy to reposition the movable body because of the sensor offset error  
9 caused by sensor drift. In mechanical bearing systems such as heart pumps, which are quite  
10 small and house very small batteries, excessive energy drains can significantly reduce the life  
11 of the pump.

12 Perhaps the most severe disadvantage of known self-adjusting magnetic bearing  
13 systems is that they do not account for sensor offsets or errors, due to sensor drift or other  
14 factors, in the event that they have to reboot or restart. Reboots or restarts may be necessary  
15 when the battery loses its power or a computer malfunction occurs. Some magnetic bearing  
16 systems come with factory sensor output settings, but sensors drift over time and the factory  
17 sensors may not be adequate for reboots or restarts after a period of time. Some positioners  
18 or controllers include certain limits to improve or account for transient response. If the sensor  
19 offset is not accounted for in the sensor reading output, it is possible that the controller  
20 cannot compensate for the offset upon reboot or restart. The result would be a large power  
21 dissipation or even failure of the movable body or rotor to levitate. This problem could be  
22 fatal in magnetic bearing systems such as heart pumps, residing in people with weak hearts.

23 Thus, it would be an advancement in the art to provide a magnetic bearing system  
24 and method for positioning a movable body that accounts for sensor offset or error, due to  
25 sensor drift or other factors. It would be an additional advancement in the art to provide such  
26 a system and method that could adjust a sensor output to account for sensor offset to ease the

1 burden on magnetic bearing system positioner or position controller. It would be an  
2 additional advancement in the art to provide such a system and method that could store an  
3 estimated sensor offset adjustment and use the stored estimate or adjustment to position the  
4 movable body in the event of a restart or reboot. Such a system and method in accordance  
5 with the present invention is disclosed and claimed herein.  
6

### 7 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

8 The apparatus of the present invention has been developed in response to the present  
9 state of the art, and in particular, in response to the problems and needs in the art that have  
10 not yet been fully solved by currently available magnetic bearing systems. The present  
11 invention solves many or all of the foregoing problems by introducing a system and method  
12 by which a magnetic bearing system can adjust for sensor offset when positioning a  
13 magnetically suspended movable body and use the adjustment during regular operation and  
14 in a reboot or restart situation.

15 In accordance with the invention as embodied and broadly described herein a  
16 magnetic bearing system is provided. The magnetic bearing system may include a sensor for  
17 measuring the displacement of the movable body and providing a displacement output. In  
18 one embodiment, the sensor is configured to convert the displacement output to a  
19 displacement voltage, thus making it easier to adjust.

20 The displacement output or voltage may be used by a sensor offset compensation  
21 module to adjust the displacement output to account for a sensor offset. This may be done  
22 by estimating the amount of sensor offset and adjusting the displacement output or voltage  
23 by the estimate. The sensor offset may be estimated by taking and storing a number of  
24 displacement outputs over a period of time and averaging the displacement outputs to  
25 approximate the amount of sensor offset in the displacement output. In one embodiment,  
26 stored displacement outputs are selectively used depending upon a comparison of the

1 displacement output against a threshold. In other embodiments, a weighted average or  
2 moving average may be used to estimate the amount of sensor offset for adjustment  
3 purposes.

4 Nonvolatile memory may be used to store displacement outputs repeatedly taken by  
5 the sensor. Executable programs may be stored in nonvolatile memory or other memory  
6 storage devices to perform the estimation algorithms and to control the functioning of the  
7 system. Memory may also be used to store updated sensor offset estimates or adjusted  
8 displacement outputs.

9 A position control module may be configured to receive and use the adjusted  
10 displacement output of the sensor offset compensation module to approximate the point of  
11 substantial axial equilibrium of the movable body. In one embodiment, the position control  
12 module is a virtual zero power controller. The position control module may be equipped to  
13 receive stored estimates of the sensor offset or stored adjusted displacement output for use  
14 during a restart, reset or reboot of the system.

15 An actuator module or actuator uses the output of the position control module to  
16 create mechanical or electrical force for positioning the movable body to the point of  
17 substantial axial equilibrium determined by the position control module.

18 In one embodiment, the magnetic bearing system is a heart pump apparatus which  
19 has a housing for receiving and discharging blood fluid. The rotor is positioned within the  
20 housing between an inlet port and outlet port. Permanent magnets are positioned to control  
21 the radial position of the rotor, and the pitch and yaw of the rotor. An electromagnet actively  
22 controls the position of the rotor in the axial direction. The heart pump may include an  
23 electromagnetic motor for rotating the rotor about a central axis.

24 Accordingly, the present invention provides a magnetic bearing system and method  
25 for positioning a movable body that accounts for sensor offset or sensor error. The present  
26 invention also provides a system and method for storing an estimated sensor offset or

1 adjusted displacement output and using the stored estimate to position the movable body  
2 during regular use, or in the event of a restart, reboot or other type of reset. These and other  
3 objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become more fully apparent  
4 from the following description and appended claims, or may be learned by the practice of the  
5 invention as set forth hereinafter.

### 6 7 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

8 In order that the manner in which the above-recited and other advantages of the  
9 invention are obtained will be readily understood, a more particular description of the  
10 invention briefly described above will be rendered by reference to specific embodiments  
11 thereof which are illustrated in the appended drawings. Understanding that these drawings  
12 depict only typical embodiments of the invention and are not therefore to be considered to  
13 be limiting of its scope, the invention will be described and explained with additional  
14 specificity and detail through the use of the accompanying drawings in which:

15 Figure 1 is a block diagram view of a movable body suspended in a magnetic  
16 bearing system according to the present invention;

17 Figure 2 is a flow chart of a method of positioning a suspended movable body  
18 according to the present invention;

19 Figure 3 is a block diagram of a magnetically suspended pump apparatus;

20 Figure 4 is a block diagram of the magnetically suspended pump apparatus of Figure  
21 3; and

22 Figure 5 is a block diagram of the sensor offset compensation algorithm of Figure  
23 4.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Certain embodiments of a system in accordance with the invention are now described with reference to the Figures 1-5, where like reference numbers indicate identical or functionally similar elements. The components of the present invention, as generally described and illustrated in the Figures, may be implemented in a wide variety of configurations. Thus, the following more detailed description of the embodiments of the system and method of the present invention, as represented in the Figures 1-5, is not intended to limit the scope of the invention, as claimed, but is merely representative of present embodiments of the invention.

Various components of the invention are described herein as “modules.” In various embodiments, the modules may be implemented as software, hardware, firmware, electronic circuits, or any combination thereof. For example, as used herein, a module may include any type of computer instruction or computer executable code located within a memory device and/or transmitted as electronic signals over a system bus or network. An identified module may, for instance, comprise one or more physical or logical blocks of computer instructions, which may be organized as an object, procedure, function, or the like.

Nevertheless, the identified modules need not be located together, but may comprise disparate instructions stored in different locations, which together implement the described functionality of the module. Indeed, a module may comprise a single instruction, or many instructions, and may even be distributed over several different code segments, among different programs, and across several memory devices.

As used herein, the term executable code, or merely “executable,” is intended to include any type of computer instruction and computer executable code that may be located within a memory device and/or transmitted as electronic signals over a system bus, electronic circuit, or network. An identified module of executable code may, for instance, comprise one or more physical or logical blocks of computer instructions which may, for instance, be



1 organized as an object, procedure, or function. Nevertheless, the executables of an identified  
2 module need not be located together, but may comprise disparate instructions stored in  
3 different locations which together comprise the module and achieve the purpose stated for  
4 the module. Indeed, an executable may be a single instruction, or many instructions, and  
5 may even be distributed over several different code segments, among different programs, and  
6 across several memory devices.

7 Similarly, operational data may be identified and illustrated herein within modules,  
8 and may be embodied in any suitable form and organized within any suitable type of data  
9 structure to be used, produced, or operated on during execution of an executable. The  
10 operational data may be collected as a single data set, or may be distributed over different  
11 locations including over different storage devices, and may at least partially exist merely as  
12 electronic signals on a system bus, electronic circuit, or network.

13 With particular reference to Figure 1, a magnetic bearing system is generally  
14 designated at 10. The system 10 includes a movable body 12 suspended by a magnetic  
15 bearing system 14. The magnetic bearing system 14 may include actively controlled magnets  
16 or passively controlled magnets. In one embodiment, permanent magnets 15 and 16  
17 cooperate with each other and with an electromagnet 18 to suspend the movable body 12.  
18 The moveable body 12 may contain an annular permanent magnet 16 acting as an inner race  
19 which interacts with the permanent magnet 15, acting as an outer race, to suspend the  
20 moveable body 12. The permanent magnets are employed to carry all static loads including  
21 those due to gravity. An electromagnet 18 also known as a coil, serves to stabilize the  
22 moveable body 12. The magnetic bearing system and the moveable body are axis symmetric  
23 about an axial direction axis 20. The permanent magnets are employed to carry all static  
24 loads. The electromagnets are used for controlling the position of the body in the axial  
25 direction 20.  
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1 The system 10 includes a sensor 22 for measuring the displacement of the movable  
2 body 12 and providing a displacement output 24. The sensor 22 may be configured to  
3 convert the displacement output 24, which in one embodiment is measured in millimeters,  
4 into a voltage. It will be appreciated that in electromagnetic systems, voltages may be easier  
5 to adjust and use to position the movable body 12. The sensor 22 may operate according to  
6 optical, induction or capacitance principles to determine the position of the movable body  
7 12.

8 The system 10 also includes a sensor offset compensation module 26 which is  
9 configured to receive the displacement output 24 from the sensor 22. It will be appreciated  
10 by those of skill in the art that over time, the sensor may develop a sensor offset, which  
11 becomes a property of the displacement output 24. The sensor offset compensation module  
12 26 is configured to adjust the displacement output 24 to account for the sensor offset. The  
13 sensor offset compensation module 26 provides an estimated sensor offset and adjusts the  
14 displacement output 24 by the estimated sensor offset to create an adjusted displacement  
15 output 28. The sensor offset compensation module 26 may be configured to store a plurality  
16 of displacement outputs 24 repeatedly measured over a period of time. The repeated  
17 measurements may be taken of the movable body 12 as part of an ongoing offset estimation  
18 process.  
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21 In one embodiment, the sensor offset compensation module 26 selectively stores a  
22 displacement output 24 by comparing a variance of the displacement outputs against a  
23 predetermined threshold to determine a start time and an end time for storing the  
24 displacement offsets. If there is a lot of variance in the displacement outputs, the offset  
25 compensation module 26 may wait until there is less variance to store displacement outputs  
26

1 24. In this way, only displacement outputs 24 that reflect steady state conditions are stored.  
2 In another embodiment, all displacement outputs 24 may be stored, but only a selective  
3 plurality of displacement outputs 24 are used to estimate the sensor offset. The displacement  
4 outputs 24 are selected for use by comparing a magnitude of each displacement output 24  
5 against a predetermined threshold. Displacement outputs 24 that are unusually high or low  
6 may not be used, thus increasing the accuracy of the sensor offset estimate.  
7

8 The sensor offset compensation module 26 estimates the sensor offset by taking an  
9 average value of the stored displacement outputs 24. In one embodiment, the sensor offset  
10 compensation module 26 takes a weighted average by weighting certain displacement outputs  
11 24 depending on the variance of the outputs in a similar segment of time. The sensor 22 may  
12 take continual measurements and provide multiple displacement outputs 24. The offset  
13 compensation module 26 may take a moving average of a predetermined number of  
14 displacement outputs 24 by continually averaging the last predetermined number of stored  
15 displacement outputs 24. For example, if the predetermined number of stored displacement  
16 outputs 24 is twenty, when the twenty-first displacement output 24 is input into the offset  
17 compensation module 26, the first displacement output 24 may be dropped and displacement  
18 outputs two through twenty-one may be used to take the average. In another embodiment,  
19 the sensor offset compensation module 26 estimates the sensor offset by determining a  
20 median value of the stored displacement outputs 24. In yet another embodiment, the sensor  
21 offset compensation module 26 estimates the sensor offset by determining the mode value  
22 of the stored displacement outputs 24. As will be discussed in greater detail below, because  
23 the movable body 12 is suspended near equilibrium, the magnitude of the displacement  
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1 output is close to the amount of sensor offset. Accordingly, averaging the displacement  
2 outputs 24 provides a good estimate of the sensor offset. It will be appreciated by those of  
3 skill in the art that other algorithms may be used to approximate the sensor offset.

4 Displacement outputs 24 may be stored in nonvolatile memory 30. The memory 30  
5 may also be part of a CPU or computer and may store executable files for driving the system  
6 and running various modules or algorithms. In this configuration, various bus lines or other  
7 communication paths (not shown) may be used to communicate between the memory 30 and  
8 each of the various modules in the system 10. Input and output into the memory 30 may be  
9 facilitated by a digital-to-analog or analog-to-digital converters. In another embodiment,  
10 each module, may store its own executable files. In the embodiment of Figure 1, the system  
11 10 may include analog to digital and digital to analog converters to facilitate interaction  
12 between various digital and analog components of the modules. The memory 30 may also  
13 store adjusted displacement outputs 28 or estimated sensor outputs. The adjusted  
14 displacement outputs 28 or estimated sensor outputs may be recalled from the memory 30  
15 and used to position the movable body 12 to a point of substantial axial equilibrium during  
16 a reset, reboot, restart, or similar power up of the system 10. In one embodiment, an initial  
17 estimated sensor offset may be stored in the memory 30 during assembly of the system 10.

18 The system 10 may also include a position control module 36 which receives and  
19 uses the adjusted displacement output 28 of the sensor offset compensation module 26 to  
20 approximate a point of substantial axial equilibrium of the movable body 12. In one  
21 embodiment, the position controller module 36 is a virtual zero power controller, or "VZP."  
22 Any of a known variety of VZP controllers may be used. All VZP controllers are  
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1 characterized by a small output in response to low frequency sinusoidal inputs. Linear VZP  
2 controllers typically have a transfer function of zero at zero.

3 An actuator module or actuator 38, may convert an output 40 of the position control  
4 module 36 into a force for positioning the movable body 12 to the point of substantial axial  
5 equilibrium in the magnetic bearing system. In one embodiment, the actuator module 38 is  
6 the electromagnet 18 which provides an electromagnetic force to position the movable body  
7 12 to the point of substantial axial equilibrium. The actuator module 38 may include an  
8 amplifier. It will be appreciated by those of skill in the art that in alternative embodiments,  
9 the force created by the actuator may be an electrostatic force, a fluid force, a contact force,  
10 a mechanical force or other force to position the movable body 12. The position controller  
11 36 may include an amplifier when the output 40 is a high power signal.

12 Referring now to Figure 2, a flowchart 50 for a method of positioning a movable  
13 body 12 suspended in a magnetic bearing system having a displacement sensor 22 is shown.  
14 The method may include measuring 52 the axial position of the movable body 12 with the  
15 sensor 22 to produce a displacement output 24. In one embodiment, the measurement is  
16 taken of the movable body 12 when it is suspended, or in a levitating position. A sensor  
17 offset in the displacement output 24 is estimated 54. The estimated sensor offset is stored  
18 55 in nonvolatile memory. The displacement output 24 is adjusted 56 for a sensor offset  
19 using the estimated displacement output. The adjusted displacement output may then be  
20 input 60 into a position controller and converted 62 to a force for positioning the movable  
21 body 12. The movable body 12 may then be positioned 64 with the force and the process is  
22 repeated 66.  
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1           Estimating 54 the sensor offset includes storing a plurality of displacement outputs  
2 24 over a period of time. The period of time may be determined by comparing a variance of  
3 the plurality of displacement outputs 24 against a predetermined threshold to determine a  
4 start time and an end time. The threshold may be set such that if the displacement outputs  
5 24 are varying more than is desired, the storing of displacement outputs may not yet start, or  
6 if already started, may temporarily end until displacement outputs within the predetermined  
7 variance range are measured. Alternatively, all displacement outputs 24 may be stored and  
8 selective displacement outputs 24 may be used for the estimating 54 the sensor offset,  
9 according to how the measured displacement output 24 compare to a predetermined  
10 threshold. In one embodiment, estimating 54 the sensor offset includes taking an average  
11 value of stored displacement outputs 24. The sensor offset may also be estimated 54 by  
12 taking a moving or continual average of a predetermined number of stored displacement  
13 outputs 24. This may be done by averaging a preselected number or set of displacement  
14 outputs 24 each time a new displacement output 24 is added to the set and the oldest  
15 measured displacement output 24 is dropped from the set. The sensor offset may be  
16 estimated 54 by a weighted average where displacement output 24 values are scaled  
17 according to a predetermined formula. For example, displacement output 24 that barely fall  
18 within the acceptable range of outputs may be given less weight than those displacement  
19 output 24 which are solidly within the predetermined range of acceptable displacement  
20 outputs. It will be appreciated by those of skill in the art that a variety of ways may be  
21 employed to estimate the sensor offset in the displacement output 24 value. These may  
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1 include using a median value of the stored displacement outputs 24 or a mode value of the  
2 stored displacement outputs 24.

3 In an alternative embodiment, a latest displacement output may be adjusted 56 by  
4 the estimated sensor offset and stored in nonvolatile memory 30. It will be appreciated that  
5 in practice, forces are continually acting on the movable body 12 and the measured position  
6 or displacement of the movable body 12 may be different with each measurement 52.  
7 Additionally, the sensor offset may ebb and flow as the sensor drift phenomenon slowly  
8 affects the sensor reading. Storing 55 the latest estimate used to adjust the displacement  
9 output 24, or the latest adjusted displacement output 28 in nonvolatile memory 30 allows the  
10 latest, and presumably the best correction or adjustment to be used to account for a sensor  
11 offset in the sensor reading to be used in a restart, reboot, or reset situation.  
12

13  
14 Inputting 60 the adjusted displacement output 28 into a body position controller  
15 module 36 for determining how best to position the movable body 12 to a point of substantial  
16 axial equilibrium may include recalling the stored adjusted displacement output 28 and/or  
17 estimated sensor offset.  
18

19 Converting 62 the adjusted displacement output to a force for positioning the  
20 movable body may include mechanically creating a force to substantially position the  
21 movable body at the point of substantial axial equilibrium. In one embodiment, as discussed  
22 in more detail below, converting 62 the adjusted displacement output to a force for  
23 positioning 64 the movable body 12 comprises electronically creating a force to position the  
24 movable body at the point of substantial axial equilibrium.  
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1 Referring now to Figure 3, the magnetic bearing system in one embodiment of the  
2 present invention, is a pump 110. This magnetically suspended pump or pump apparatus  
3 includes a housing 112 having an inlet port 114 for receiving fluid and an outlet port 116 for  
4 discharging fluid. A rotor 118 is positioned within the housing 112 for pumping blood or  
5 fluid between the inlet port 114 and the outlet port 116. The system 110 also includes a  
6 plurality of permanent magnets 120 for passively controlling the position of the rotor  
7 radially, and the pitch and yaw of the rotor. An electromagnet 122 actively controls the  
8 position of the rotor in the axial direction. The permanent magnets 120 are employed to  
9 carry all static loads. The electromagnets 122 are used for controlling the position of the  
10 rotor 118 in a particular direction. It will be appreciated that support of the rotor 118  
11 requires control of six degrees of freedom: three translations long the x-axis 124, y-axis 126,  
12 and z-axis 128, and three rotational displacements about those axis  $M_x$ , 130,  $M_y$ , 132, and  
13  $M_z$  134. In the illustrated embodiment, the electromagnet 122 controls the axial direction of  
14 the rotor 118, or movement along the x-axis 124.

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17 The rotational displacement  $M_x$  130 of the rotor 118 about a central axis 124 is  
18 driven by a motor 136 magnetically coupled to the rotor 118 through a partition 140. The  
19 motor 136 may be an electromagnetic motor or servo motor connected to a power source  
20 which may include a battery (not shown). Motor-driven, magnetically suspended rotors in  
21 a housing with inlet ports and outlet ports are known in the art and the axial and other  
22 suspension dynamics of the rotor may be configured in a number of ways to practice the  
23 teachings of this invention with different translational or rotational being actively or  
24 passively controlled. One such suitable configuration of magnetic bearings in a pump  
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1 configuration to which the teachings of this invention can be applied is the HeartQuest™  
2 heart pump manufactured by MedQuest Products, Inc.

3       The pump 110 may also include a sensor 145 for measuring the axial displacement  
4 of the rotor 118 and producing a displacement output 147. In one embodiment the rotor 118  
5 is measured in a suspended or levitating position. The sensor 145 may be configured to  
6 convert the displacement output 147 from a measure of distance into a voltage. It will be  
7 appreciated that minor corrections to the position of the rotor 118 are done by the  
8 electromagnet 122 which can alter the position of the rotor 118 by changing the voltage or  
9 current in coils of the electromagnet 122. The rotor 118 position may be measured while it  
10 is levitating. In one alternative embodiment, measurements may be taken of the  
11 displacement of the rotor in a plurality of levitating or non-levitating positions to produce a  
12 plurality of displacement outputs. These outputs may then be used to estimate a sensor  
13 offset.  
14

15  
16       An offset compensation module 146 adjusts the output 147 of the sensor 145 to  
17 account for sensor offset. The offset compensation module 146 estimates a sensor offset and  
18 adjusts the displacement output 147 by the estimated sensor offset to create an adjusted  
19 displacement output 148. As discussed in greater detail below, the estimation of the sensor  
20 offset may be made by a compensation algorithm 157 which averages a plurality of stored  
21 displacement outputs 147 contained in the system 110 from the factory or stored with each  
22 measurement of the rotor 118 position. The system 110 is configured to repeatedly take rotor  
23 118 position measurements and make modifications or adjustments to the rotor 118 position.  
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26       In one embodiment, the offset compensation module 146 compares a variance of the

1 plurality of displacement outputs 147 against a predetermined threshold to determine a start  
2 time and an end time for taking measurements. As discussed above, if there is a lot of  
3 variance in the displacement outputs, the offset compensation module 146 may wait until  
4 there is less variance to store displacement outputs 147. In this way, only displacement  
5 outputs 147 that are within a certain range are stored. In another embodiment, all  
6 displacement outputs 147 may be stored, but only a selective plurality of displacement  
7 outputs 147 are used to estimate the sensor offset. The sensor offset compensation module  
8 146 may estimate the sensor offset in a number of ways, including taking an average of one  
9 or more different displacement outputs 147, taking a weighted or a moving average of one  
10 or more displacement outputs 147, or determining the median or mode value of one or more  
11 displacement outputs 147.  
12  
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14 A most recent adjusted displacement output 148 or estimated sensor offset may be  
15 stored in memory 150. The memory 150 may include nonvolatile memory 152, random  
16 access memory 154, or other types of memory or storage devices, including, but not limited  
17 to, read only memory. Individual offset estimates may also be stored in memory 150, as  
18 well as displacement outputs 147 or other data used to derive an estimate of the sensor  
19 offset. It will also be appreciated that each module may include its own memory where  
20 executable files are stored for controlling the operation of a particular module.  
21

22 In practice, forces are continually acting on the rotor 118 and the measured position  
23 or displacement of the rotor 118 may be different with each measurement by the sensor 145.  
24 Additionally, the sensor offset may ebb and flow as the sensor drift phenomenon slowly  
25 affects the sensor reading. Storing a latest adjusted displacement output 147 in nonvolatile  
26

1 memory 150 allows the latest, and presumably the best correction or adjustment to be used  
2 or recalled to account for a sensor offset in the displacement output 147 when restarting,  
3 reboot, resetting, or otherwise powering up the system.

4           The memory 150 may be part of a computer 156 which may include a processor 158  
5 for controlling the function of the system 110 and/or one or more modules or executable files  
6 in the system 110. It will be appreciated by those of skill in the art that output 147 from the  
7 sensor module or other modules to the computer and from the computer to one or more  
8 modules may require an analog-to-digital or digital-to-analog interface 160. It will also be  
9 appreciated by those of skill in the art that the computer 156 and modules may be contained  
10 within the housing 112.  
11

12           The offset compensation module 146 may input the adjusted displacement output  
13 148 into a rotor position controller 162 configured to determine the point of substantial axial  
14 equilibrium of the rotor 118. In one embodiment, the rotor position controller 162 is a virtual  
15 zero power controller or VZP controller 162. The VZP Controller 162 receives the adjusted  
16 displacement output 148 and stabilizes the rotor 118 within the housing 112. The VZP  
17 Controller and has low or zero gain at direct current. By adjusting the displacement output  
18 147, the measure of rotor 118 position is close to equilibrium in the axial direction.  
19 Accordingly, the VZP Controller 162 does not have to work as hard to determine where the  
20 equilibrium position is.  
21

22           An actuator module or actuator 164 uses the output 166 from the VZP Controller  
23 162 to create a force for positioning the rotor 118. In one embodiment, the actuator 164 is  
24 the electromagnet 122 and the force is a electronically created or is an electromagnetic force.  
25  
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1 The rotor 118 may be positioned by adjusting the voltage to the electromagnet 122 to create  
2 a stronger or weaker electronic field. The actuator 164 or position controller 162 may also  
3 include a current amplifier. It will be appreciated by those of skill in the art that in  
4 alternative embodiments, the force created by the actuator may be an electrostatic force, a  
5 fluid force, a contact force, a mechanical force or other force to position the movable body  
6  
7 12. For example the actuator 164 may create a force by moving a plunger (not shown) near  
8 the rotor 118.

9 There are several forces which act upon the rotor 118. These may include fluid  
10 forces, gravitational forces, and dynamic forces. The fluid forces are due to fluid pressures  
11 acting on the rotor and fluid passes from the inlet port 114 to the outlet port 116 and the  
12 changes in momentum as the flow direction is changed. The gravitational forces are due to  
13 the difference between the weight of the rotor 118 and the buoyant force, in the fluid, acting  
14 on the rotor 118 in different orientations. Dynamic forces may act upon the rotor 118 in a  
15 situation where the pump 110 is in human body and can experience sudden motions, impact  
16 after a fall, periods of intense exercise causing changes in blood pressure, and the like.  
17

18 Referring now to Figure 4, a block diagram of a circuit 180 of the pump 110 (figure  
19 3) of present invention is shown. The circuit 180 illustrates the rotor axial dynamics 170 of  
20 the pump 110. The sensor 145, virtual zero power (VZP) controller 162, and the actuator  
21 164 are also illustrated. The circuit may also interact with the computer 156, which in one  
22 embodiment, includes a compensation algorithm 184.  
23

24 The VZP controller helps balance the forces acting on the rotor 118 (Figure 3).  
25 These forces may include a fluid force  $F_{\text{fluid}}$  188, an actuator force  $F_{\text{actuator}}$  190 generated by  
26

1 the actuator 164, and a force due to the magnetic bearings in the axial direction  $F_{\text{bearing,axial}}$   
2 192. These forces combine to produce a net force 194 on the rotor 118 in the axial direction.  
3 The 1/ms block 196 combined with the 1/s block 198 illustrate the rotor mass dynamics  
4 under Newton's law, where ( $m$  = the mass of the rotor 118) and ( $s$  = the laplace transform  
5 variable). The blocks 196 and 198 combine to output the position 200 of the rotor in the  
6 axial direction relative to the axial equilibrium point of the magnetic bearings, or  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200.  
7 A feedback loop 202 inputs into the  $K_{\text{bearing}}$  box 204, where  $K_{\text{bearing}}$  is the axial stiffness of the  
8 permanent magnet bearings acting on the position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 of the rotor 118 in the axial  
9 direction.  
10

11  
12 The sensor 145 is illustrated at the circuit level in Figure 4 as a summation block 210  
13 in combination with a  $K_{\text{sensor}}$  block 212, where  $K_{\text{sensor}}$  is the sensor 145 gain. The summation  
14 block 210 combines the axial position of the rotor,  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200, with the sensor zero position  
15 214, or  $X_0$ , the position of the rotor 118 where the sensor reading is zero. By way of  
16 illustrative example, if  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 were equal to  $X_0$  214, the output 216 of the summation  
17 block 210 would be zero.  $X_0$  214 is the offset of the sensor's "zero position," which is a  
18 virtual place in space relative to the zero mechanical position of the rotor 118 where the rotor  
19 118 is in unstable equilibrium. Accordingly,  $X_0$  214 is a property of the sensor 145, not a  
20 reading from the sensor 145.  
21

22 The  $K_{\text{sensor}}$  block 212, compares the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 to the sensor zero  
23 position  $X_0$  214, and multiplies that by a conversion factor that outputs a voltage. The  $K_{\text{sensor}}$   
24 block 212 converts the output 216 of the summation block 210 into the units, volts per meter.  
25  
26

1 Thus, in one embodiment, the displacement output 147 of the sensor 145 may be viewed as  
2 linear according to the formula

$$y = kx + b,$$

3  
4 where "x" in the formula is the input to the sensor 145, which is the position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 of the  
5 rotor 118. "Y" in the formula represents the displacement output 147 of the sensor 145. "b"  
6 may represent  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 combined with the sensor offset represented by  $X_0$  214. The scale  
7 factor "k" in the formula is represented by the  $K_{\text{sensor}}$  block 212.  
8

9 The compensation algorithm 184 compensates or adjusts for the sensor offset  $X_0$  214  
10 in the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200. The compensation algorithm 184 receives the displacement  
11 output 147 from the sensor 145 and as discussed in more detail below, uses it to estimate an  
12 adjustment to compensate for the sensor offset  $X_0$  214 in the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200. The  
13 estimate 220 output from the compensation algorithm 184 is combined with the sensor  
14 reading or displacement output 147 at the summing junction 222.  
15

16 Measurements of the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 are repeatedly taken over a period of  
17 time and used to continuously compensate for the sensor offset  $X_0$  214 in the rotor position  
18  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200. The measurements may be taken with the rotor 118 in a levitated state. These  
19 compensations or adjusted displacement outputs 148 are used by the VZP controller 162  
20 during regular operation to adjust the position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 of the rotor 118. They may also be  
21 stored, along with sensor offset estimates 220, or displacement outputs 147. In the event that  
22 the power source fails or the system freezes up and needs to reboot, reset, or otherwise  
23 restart, a most recent adjusted displacement output 148, sensor offset estimate 220, or  
24  
25  
26

1 displacement output 147, which incorporates the most recent sensor offset  $X_0$  214, is  
2 available for input into the VZP Controller 162.

3 It will be appreciated by those of skill in the art that the VZP controller gains are  
4 selected such that the pump rotor 118 is actively levitated in the axial direction. The VZP  
5 Controller 162 can be designed by experiment, pole-placement design, or other methods  
6 known to those skilled in the art of controller design. Other control objectives such as  
7 transient performance and vibration suppression may also be used in the design. One feature  
8 of the VZP controller 162 is its low amplification of low-frequency sensor signals and its  
9 stabilization of the rotor 118 in the levitated position. In the embodiment of Figure 4, the  
10 controller 162 is configured such that the response to a constant input is zero after transients  
11 decay away.  
12

13  
14 The  $K_p$  block 224 of the VZP Controller takes into account the destabilizing force  
15 caused by the  $K_{bearing}$  box 204. The  $K_p$  block 224 acts like spring to reign in the forward or  
16 other displacement of the rotor 118 which will adjust the current into a  $K_{actuator}$  block 226 to  
17 produce a force that pulls the rotor 118 back into equilibrium.  
18

19 The  $K_dS$  block 228 takes into account the velocity of the rotor 118 as it reacts to  
20 forces acting on it in the axial direction. The  $K_dS$  block 228 acts as a shock absorber or a  
21 damper. If there is a velocity in the forward or other direction, then the  $K_dS$  block 228  
22 communicates with the  $K_{actuator}$  block 226 to provide a suitable correcting force.  
23

24 The  $K_I/S$  block 230 is an integrator that looks at the output 232 of the  $K_p$  block 224  
25 to determine if a relatively constant current is being applied. An output 238 of the  $K_I/S$  block  
26 230 is added to the input of 148 of the VZP Controller 162. If the output 232 of the  $K_p$  block

224 creates a continual demand for current change, the actuator 164 is going to get hot and it can be assumed that there is an error in what the VZP Controller 162 has determined is the equilibrium point of the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 to be. Accordingly, the  $K_I/S$  block 230 performs a function like an auto load leveler. The  $K_I/S$  block 230 affects a change in the equilibrium point of the rotor 118. Once the  $K_I/S$  block 230 determines that the output 232 of the  $K_p$  block 224 is a substantially constant current, the  $K_p$  block 224 output 232 and an output 234 from the  $K_dS$  block 228 are combined at the summing junction 236 to provide an input 166 to the  $K_{\text{actuator}}$  block 226.

For purposes of illustration, assume that the rotor 118 is in equilibrium and  $F_{\text{fluid}}$  188 is zero. It follows that the axial bearing force,  $F_{\text{bearing,axial}}$  192 is also zero. If this were not true, the rotor 118 would not be in substantial static equilibrium, since force 194 would be nonzero. Accordingly, with the  $F_{\text{fluid}}$  188 at zero, the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 is also at zero, or in other words, the rotor position,  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200, is in the “neutral position” with respect to the permanent magnets (Figure 3).

Since in the present example, we have set steady-state operation of the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 equal to zero, for purposes of illustration, the input 216 to the  $K_{\text{sensor}}$  block 212 is minus the sensor offset,  $-X_0$ , and the output of the  $K_{\text{sensor}}$  block 212 is  $(-K_{\text{sensor}} \times X_0)$ , where  $K_{\text{sensor}}$  is the amount of sensor 145 gain. Thus, the steady state output of the sensor 145 provides a “sensor neutral” or zero position relative to the stable neutral position of the rotor 118.

In actual practice, however, the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 is subject to non-zero fluid forces 188 and electronic noise, and the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 only approximates the zero



1 position, or the bearing equilibrium position in operation. Thus, the sensor displacement  
2 output 147 can only be used to derive an estimate of the "sensor neutral" position. Using  
3 " $X\hat{o}$ " to designate an estimate of  $X_0$ , the "sensor neutral" or zero position, this estimate can  
4 be used to adjust the output 147 of the sensor to compensate for the sensor offset error. As  
5 will be discussed in greater detail below, this is accomplished by the  $X_0$  compensation  
6 algorithm 184, by adding  $-(K_{\text{sensor}} \times X\hat{o})$  to the sensor output 147 at the summing junction  
7 222. Thus, with this compensation, the input to the VZP controller 148 is very close to zero.  
8 This is important during a power up, restart, reboot, or other type of reset, so that the VZP  
9 controller 162 need not correct for cumulative drift and offset in the sensor 145. Moreover,  
10 the VZP integrator will typically include anti-windup features or other limits to improve  
11 transient response. If the sensor 145 offset is not corrected, it is possible that the VZP  
12 controller 162 cannot compensate for the offset. The result would be large power dissipation  
13 in the actuator 164 (Figure 3) or even failure of the system to levitate the rotor 118 (Figure  
14 3).

15  
16  
17 In a heart pump application, for example, the typical behavior of the rotor 118 during  
18 operation in the heart pump will be: a) a transient motion during power-up of the device,  
19 where the VZP integrator output 238 is set to zero; b) relatively constant position where the  
20  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 is substantially at zero during rest periods of the person in whom the pump 110 is  
21 located, with some superimposed periodic motion due to the beating heart – the VZP  
22 integrator 230 is functioning during this period; or c) periods of larger rotor 118 motion in  
23 the axial direction during exercise due to body accelerations and larger variations in blood  
24 pressure – the VZP integrator is functioning during this period also.  
25  
26

1           Periods of rest may provide the best sensor or displacement output 147 data with  
2           which to estimate the sensor offset. Rest periods can be detected by measuring the variance  
3           of the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 and/or the peak-to-peak motion of the rotor position  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200.  
4           During rest, the average value of  $X_{\text{rotor}}$  200 approximates zero. Setting  $[0, T]$  to be an interval  
5           of rest where "T" equals a length of rest period, then one way to compute  $\hat{X}$  is to average  
6           the displacement outputs 147 over  $[0, T]$  and use this to adjust the displacement output 147.  
7           A minimum T may chosen so that noise is sufficiently averaged to zero and T can be any  
8           larger time provided that the person remains in rest. T should not be so long as to prevent  
9           updating  $\hat{X}$  in response to sensor drift.  
10

11           It may be the case that the mean value of  $F_{\text{fluid}}$  188 adds a bias to the sensor offset  
12           estimate  $\hat{X}$ . This bias can be made small by using permanent magnet bearings with a large  
13           value of  $K_{\text{bearing}}$ . In addition, if the resting blood pressure of the patient in whom the pump  
14           is implanted is known, this effect can be compensated by offsetting the estimate  $\hat{X}$  by the  
15           expected value of  $F_{\text{fluid}}/K_{\text{bearing}}$ .  
16

17           As discussed above, there are alternative ways to estimate a sensor offset, or  
18           compensate for the sensor offset. In one alternative embodiment of the present invention,  
19           the estimate  $\hat{X}$  is computed by a weighted moving average of the displacement output 147,  
20           where the weight is inversely related to the displacement output 147 variance or other  
21           measure of variability. In another alternative embodiment, a low value for the VZP  
22           integrator 130 gain is set so that the integrator 230 itself forms an estimate of the sensor  
23           offset. If the integrator output 238 is saved following a failure or other restart sequence, it  
24           may serve the same function of adjusting the displacement output 147 by the value of  $\hat{X}$ .  
25  
26

1 Referring now to Figure 5, one embodiment of the compensation algorithm 184 is  
2 shown. A displacement output 147 is input into a low pass filter 250. The low pass filter  
3 250 may store and average successive displacement outputs 147 input into the low pass filter  
4 250. There may be alternative ways to build a low-pass filter 250. One way is to use a moving  
5 average where a predetermined number of successive displacement outputs 147 are input into  
6 the low-pass filter and stored. An average is then taken of the last predetermined number of  
7 displacement outputs 147. The low-pass filter 250 may store and take a weighted average  
8 of displacement outputs 147. The low-pass filter 250 may also store a predetermined number  
9 of displacement outputs 147 and determine a mode value or median value. The output 252  
10 may then be sampled by a switch 254 provided that the person in whom the pump is located  
11 is at rest as determined by a rest detector 256. The low-pass filter 250 output 252 is stored  
12 in a hold 258, inverted at an inverter 260 and output 220 for inputting into the summing  
13 junction 222 (Figure 4).

14 The rest detector 256 determines periods of time over which the displacement output  
15 147 is relatively stable. Direct current components of the sensor may be filtered out by a  
16 high-pass filter 260 and rectified by a squaring device 262. The output 264 of the squaring  
17 device is then smoothed by a second low-pass filter 264. If the resulting signal 266 is less  
18 than a predetermined threshold 268 a comparator 270 closes the sample switch 254 and the  
19 most recent low-pass filter output 252 is stored in the hold 258. If the displacement output  
20 147 is persistently and highly variable, considerable signal energy will pass through the high-  
21 pass filter 260 and be rectified in the squaring function 262. Due to the persistence the  
22 output of the second low-pass filter 264 will rise above the threshold and inhibit the storage  
23  
24  
25  
26

1 of the low-pass filter output 252 in the hold 258 by opening the switch 254. One feature of  
2 the compensation algorithm 184 is that it responds to a nearly constant outputting of  
3 displacement outputs 147 by outputting to itself the negative of the constant displacement  
4 output. This can be called the "slow inversion property." There are numerous ways to  
5 implement algorithms with the slow inversion property and each may be used to practice the  
6 teachings of this invention. The switch 254 will also be held open during power  
7 interruptions and other event where the approximate mean is not reliable.  
8

9 The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing  
10 from its structures, methods, or other essential characteristics as broadly described herein and  
11 claimed hereinafter. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects only as  
12 illustrative, and not restrictive. The scope of the invention is, therefore, indicated by the  
13 appended claims, rather than by the foregoing description. All changes that come within the  
14 meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are to be embraced within their scope.  
15

16 What is claimed and desired to be secured by United States Letters Patent is:  
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